

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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SUMMER PIANO PROGRAM

“This program is so important for my daughter. Playing the piano calms her down. She is fast-paced, she goes from one thing to another, but with music, she is calm. Thank you so much.” Katie’s mother said this as she was telling how grateful she was for her daughters to participate in the Summer Piano Program.

Fernando’s mother wrote in Spanish, “I enjoyed the concert so much. I like that my son Fernando got to play the piano. Thank you for helping my son.”

De’Marja’s mother kept telling us how happy the piano lessons made her daughter feel. She loved coming to the piano lessons and was a delight to work with.

Cynthia (age 4) was so happy playing the piano that she sat with her legs crossed on the chair and practiced “Merrily We Roll Along” by herself! Every session she laughed and said how much she liked playing the piano.

A piano tutor, Jill W., wrote, “Thanks so much for organizing this wonderful program. It’s so exciting to see all the families that you’ve engaged in music. I congratulate you for the innovation and dedication that you brought to this concept. It is truly a joy to be one of your volunteers.”

This was the 13th year of the Summer Piano Program, where children and youth from Uptown/Edgewater in Chicago get to take free piano lessons during the summer from volunteer piano tutors.

Out of 34 students in the program this year, eleven were going into the 8th, 9th, and 10th grades. These students did very well,

despite one student finding hard to come to the piano lesson because she stays up until 7am! Another could only come once a week because she was preparing for her upcoming quinceañera (elaborate party when a girl turns 15).

Several young children were new to the piano program this year: Four were going into kindergarten, one was going into 1st grade, one was going into 2nd grade, and one was still in Pre-K! All these young children worked hard and were very attentive.

Stories of a Few Piano Students

David A. (going into 8th gr.) didn’t have a keyboard at home last year, so he went downtown to the Harold Washington Library to practice in their practice rooms. This year our program lent him a keyboard to practice on at home. In the first 5 weeks he finished Book C, played all of Book D, and finished the first part of the next book, Book II. He completed the written theory Book 1, found the theory Book 2 online, and is doing that. His mother said “David is conflicted. He doesn’t know if he wants to go into art, as he has always planned, or go into music.” For the recital he played “You Are the Sunshine of My Life” (including the “bridge” which wasn’t included in the piano book) and “Lean on Me.” He is very serious about music.

Josue E. (going into 8th gr.) learned a lot. For the recital he played arrangements of “Yesterday” and the “Moonlight Sonata.” (When he practiced, it was beautiful to hear the “Moonlight” wafting through the piano room among all the songs of the beginning

piano students.) Josue came an hour early to the sessions and helped a boy going into kindergarten play the piano. Josue enjoyed practicing and perfecting the pieces.

David R. (going into 9th gr.) wanted to play a Christian praise song last year, and he chose “Mighty to Save.” This year we gave him “How Great Is Our God,” and he learned it quickly. He went to a Christian camp for a week and brought back “I’ve Got a River of Life,” which he wanted the choir to sing. The director wrote out the notes, and David learned it in 20 min. even though it was in a new key (2 sharps)!

Joam L. (going into 10th gr.) wanted to play the current pop song “When I was Your Man.” The program bought a copy online and made an arrangement for him. He didn’t like it. He found another arrangement online, and with the help of his piano tutor and demonstrations on YouTube, he learned to play the piece in a couple of weeks. Then he started working on the difficult “River Flows in You.” His piano tutor knew he could learn it. His grandmother says, “Joam loves to play the piano.”

Hellen S. (going into 4th gr.) entered the Summer Piano Program this year. In the first two weeks, she tore through Books A and B and the middle of Book C. We gave her the challenging “What a Wonderful World” to learn for the recital. The song had many new things to learn, and she did well.

Fatima E. (going into 5th gr.) took private piano lessons (on keyboard) as a 3rd grader. This summer (after 4th grade) she was a fiend at practicing the piano. She learned two difficult songs in “Suzuki II” each in two days. She works at reading the notes, but she has a fantastic “ear” and a good eye for the piano keys. She also works hard.

The Piano Tutors this summer have been dedicated, thoughtful, talented, and caring. Four were tutors from Inspired Youth Tutoring, one teaches with CPS, one does research on the brain at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, one works for the Chicago Bar Association and is a trustee at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, and four are students.

There are the volunteer piano tutors: Diane Danek, Terri Edelson, Josue E., Donna Forrest, Bob Guillen, Camellia Hilker, Lizzie Kramer, Sunju Julie L., Mari Lesperance, Jamey McDunn, Alan M., Beth Palmer, Ken Roman, Monique Smith, Nikki Stricker, Jasmine Tripp, and Jill Werner.

Monique Smith was a student in the program several years ago and said she wanted to help this year. From the first day she came, she was all smiles. She loved helping the younger children. It reminded her of the good time she had in the summer piano program when she was a child.

All the tutors were patient with the students and helped them work on new pieces and learn new things. The piano tutors opened new worlds for the students.

THE RECITAL!

Playing by yourself for an audience can be scary. For the recital students work hard on one or two special pieces—often above their level—and play for an audience of families and friends..

The pieces may sound easy, but a lot is involved. Try it sometime! The students have to understand notation, listen to the sound, have finger dexterity and coordination, concentrate, and be persistent. The students this year learned a lot and gained tremendously. The 2013 recital was spectacular.

29 students played in the recital, with an audience of over 70 people admiring

them--parents, relatives, brothers, sisters, and friends. A young man (Eric V.) who came to hear his nephew play realized he knew Beth Palmer from when he was in the Tutoring Program several years ago. We were also honored to have a neighbor who plays violin in the Lyric Opera Orchestra come. His presence raised the standards of the program!

For this festive occasion, many of the students wore fancy clothes—girls in bright pink (“hot” pink) dresses and boys in robin’s egg blue shirts. One girl put glister on the outside corners of her eyes.

The two student announcers were the best we’ve ever had. Josue and David, both going into 8th grade, studied the names beforehand and planned what they were going to do. They spoke loudly and clearly into the microphones. They told everyone what was happening.

The student photographer, Edgar, also going into 8th grade, did an excellent job taking photos, which you can see on www.facebook.com/inspiredyouth.

The students had to work hard to learn their pieces. In the middle of the summer **Deyse S.** (going into 9th gr.) moved several blocks farther away, which made it difficult for her to come to the lessons. She worked at home on “Give My Regards to Broadway,” and played it well at the recital.

One week before the recital, **Edgar R.** (going into 8th gr.) decided to play, “Mighty to Save.” He worked on it at the lesson and in an extra lesson and polished it the next day!

Alex R. (going into 3rd gr) had a hard time learning “Peanut Butter.” He worked on it at home the day before the recital and played it beautifully the night of the recital.

The family duets were fun. **Hellen S.** and **Katie S.** (sisters) played “Money Can’t Buy Everything.” **Jovanny S.** and (3)

Fernando B. (cousins, both going into 5th gr.) played “Growing Up.” Both of these were duets from the book, where the duet part is supposed to be played by the teacher! **Eduard G.** and his sister **Analucia G.** played “Row, Row Your boat.” All of the duets were excellent.

Another amazing feature of the recital was that ten (10) students played songs with the audience singing along. This is not easy for beginning piano students. They all did a beautiful job.

Edgewater Presbyterian Church: A Place of Shalom

Thank you, Edgewater Presbyterian Church, for hosting the piano classes and the recital. This church is an amazing place—a place of “shalom.” Years ago Beth Palmer, director of Inspired Youth’s Summer Piano Program, was campaigning for an end to nuclear weapons. She happened to attend a workshop about “Shalom” where they were supposed to cut out pictures about “Shalom” from magazines. She realized the myriad of things that help create peace.

Edgewater Presbyterian Church is a place teeming with “Shalom”: A multi-cultural, multi-lingual group of people celebrates and acts on the Gospel, and from this, pre-school children gain school readiness skills, children learn to play the violin, kids come for piano classes on hot summer days, teen-agers dance, dramas of all sorts inspire the public, workers rights are fought for, the needy are ministered to, and a block party is held for neighbors. Thank you, Edgewater Presbyterian Church, for your presence of Shalom.

FIELD TRIPS

TRIP TO THE LINCOLN PARK ZOO

The day started out drizzling, but all 25 people who planned to go on the trip to the

Lincoln Park Zoo came. The rain stopped as they waited for the city bus going to the zoo.

Sometimes on field trips to museums and zoos students walk by exhibits with only a glance. On this trip the students the most curious were two 5-year old boys going into kindergarten. They stood looking at animals in different habitats for 10-15 minutes--sea lions swimming in a huge pool, various kinds of monkeys climbing and playing, lions sleeping, and farm animals: cows, goats, baby chicks, and large hens. The students got to pet the goats and they talked to the women taking care of the farm animals. They felt important climbing up into the cab of a huge tractor.

People ended up at an open garden with a large fountain near the bus stop. Several people took pictures in front of the fountain. One mother (a computer graphic artist) took videos of flowers gently moving in the breeze and posted them on her Facebook page.

The Lincoln Park Zoo is one of the few free zoos in the US. A father said he wanted to bring his children to the zoo again, when he saw how educational and exciting it was, and how easy it was to get there.

CHICAGO BOTANICAL GARDENS

Three students visited the Chicago Botanic Gardens as guests of Martha Goode, a long-time friend of Beth Palmer. Martha Goode specializes in bromeliads and succulents, plants that grow in Mexico and deserts. Martha invited the students to see the Bromeliad Society's special exhibit.

After we saw the bromeliads and succulents, members of the Bromeliad Society showed us around the different sections of the Chicago Botanic Gardens. The girls were interested in everything, examining and learning about all the plants.

A woman from the Bromeliad Society gave the three girls each a "prickly pear" with instructions to wait a week until it started to grow roots, and then to plant it. We bought small pots and a bag of cactus soil for the prickly pears.

At the end of the visit we went to the "Butterfly Gardens," a small building with glass walls and ceiling, with butterflies flying around all the plants. A butterfly landed on the bright blue blouse of one of our students. The student didn't move, and the butterfly stayed there a long time.

TRIP TO MILLENNIUM PARK IN DOWNTOWN CHICAGO

"My Favorite Place in Chicago is Navy Pier, the Shedd Aquarium, Water Tower, the Field Museum, Millennium Park, my house, Margate Park, Goudy School, hanging out at Foster Beach, downtown, Wisconsin Dells, Six Flags, gardens, stores." Students listed these in a project of the Chicago Historical Museum at the Family Fun Tent in Millennium Park.

The nine young teens walked through the Lurie Gardens at Millennium Park noticing the array of purple and green plants. They walked across the 2-story high bridge to the Art Institute. They posed in front of the huge, shiny curved "bean" (Cloud Gate), with their images reflected in strange curved forms, sometimes upside down. They helped other youth build a cylindrical tower with hundreds of small wooden blocks—inside the cylinder a girl stood motionless. If anyone bumped it, the whole structure would crash. Finally the tower got so high only the tallest boys could add to it—then we had to leave. We never found out what happened!

The students' favorite part was the Crown Fountain wading pool. In bathing suits or shorts, kids stood in front of a huge

rectangular obelisk as sheets of water poured from the top of the monument. Then they waited for a large arc of water to come from the mouth of the digital portrait shown on the front of the obelisk. The arc of water came every five minutes, and kids vied to be at the center of the stream, bending their necks down and covering their eyes, with their hair and bathing suits dripping, as they exhilarated in the summer fun.

After visiting Millennium Park, the students walked three blocks to see the Picasso statue. “It’s a cat!” “It’s a lady!” “It’s a ____!” They loved sliding down the “shoulders” of the statue. Did Mr. Picasso design the statue so that would happen? The kids love it!

They were awed by the Thompson Center, the State of Illinois Building, with its huge atrium of dazzling red and blue structural features. We wanted to go on the exposed glass elevator with its view of the huge atrium. Visitors were able to do that before “9/11,” and students were thrilled by it; but today people can only take the elevator down to the lower level—a fast ride that is too short! Only people who work in government offices on the 2nd-16th floors are allowed to go on the best elevator ride. The students still were awed at being in the State of Illinois Building.

SINGING FOR MS. ELEANOR

The former choir director of the Inspired Youth Singers, Eleanor Bilby, is a resident in LakeShore HealthCare. In August, 17 Inspired Youth Singers went to sing for her and the other people on her floor. When Ms. Eleanor saw the youth coming, she wanted them to hug her. She has always liked hugs.

Eleanor Bilby is 93 years old. She loved the half-hour concert and sang along on many of the songs. The children in the choir were privileged to get to sing for her.

SINGING FOR A BLOCK PARTY

A combined choir of the Inspired Youth Singers and the Epworth Church School Singers will perform for the Block Party outside Edgewater Presbyterian Church at the end of August. The block party features several choirs from across Chicago, activities for the children, and good food. Books from a large collection will be on sale. People are looking forward to the big event.

PICTURES ON FACEBOOK

Pictures of the piano program and the field trips are on Inspired Youth’s Facebook page: www.facebook.com/inspiredyouth.

DONATIONS

TO INSPIRED YOUTH, INC.

Inspired Youth has a wide range of donors. In the past year gifts have come from a foundation, a church women’s group, a service organization, and over 50 individuals, including present and former tutors, parents of 8th graders from Wilmette Jr. High School, pastors, friends, family, and community members. Donations have ranged from \$25 to \$7,500. Inspired Youth appreciates all these donations.

Because of the many people who volunteer, Inspired Youth does a lot with minimal funds to enrich the lives of children and families in Uptown/Edgewater in Chicago. Inspired Youth Inc. is a 501(c)(3) corporation with the IRS, so donations are tax deductible.

Contributions to Inspired Youth can be made through PayPal on the Donations page of the website: www.inspiredyouthchicago.org, or mailed to “Inspired Youth,” 5715 N. Ridge, Chicago, IL 60660.